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ABSTRACT

Designed to introduce junior and senior high school students to a variety of historical resources on local, family, and 19th century cultural history, the primary materials presented in this guide provide insight into methods of child rearing and children's lives between 1820 and 1920. Based on a major exhibition and the collections of the Strong Museum (Rochester, New York), this resource book contains photographs of original materials such as advertising pieces, documentary photographs, diagrams of children's games, song lyrics, furniture, and other artifacts of childhood. Each of the primary materials presented is accompanied by a "to the teacher" section of background information. The questions provided with the materials focus on visual literacy, comparison and analysis, and evaluation. Students use the methods of the historian as they consider the information contained in, and the limitations of, each source. In addition to providing supplementary activities for the classroom, this booklet serves as a model for the development of additional exercises using artifacts of childhood to increase student understanding of the topic. (Author/LH)

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A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF CHILDHOOD 1820-1920

SO 016 343

A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF CHILDHOOD 1820·1920

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to introduce junior and senior high school students to a variety of historical resources which can be used to learn about local, family, and nineteenth-century cultural history. Much of the material in this sourcebook is related to a long-term exhibition, "A Century of Childhood, 1820–1920," at the Strong Museum, Rochester, New York. A catalog, which was edited by museum historian, Harvey, Green and Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger, assistant historian, contains essays written by specialists in American cultural history. It provides further insight into the methods of child rearing and children's lives between 1820 and 1920.

Each of the primary materials presented is accompanied by a "To the Teacher" section of background information printed on perforated pages which can be removed from the booklet if desired. The Student Activities section consists of materials such as photographs of museum objects, excerpts from a diary, examples of children's literature, photographs and prints. The questions provided with each material correlate with and promote the skills of visual literacy: observation and examination, comparison and analysis, and evaluation. Students use the methods of the historian as they consider the information contained in and limitations of each source.

In addition to providing supplementary activities for the classroom, this workbook serves as a model for the development of additional exercises using primary and secondary local history artifacts of childhood to increase student understanding of the topic.

Assistance in preparing this sourcebook was provided by staff at the Strong Museum, particularly, Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger.

Marie Hewett
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TO THE TEACHER

Advertising Products for Children

With the invention of pulp paper and mechanized printing presses and the introduction of chromolithography, the variety of printed advertising forms increased. One of these forms is the trade card. Trade cards, usually equivalent in size to a postcard, were given out as promotions for specific products. Most cards were lithographed and many were mechanically colored through a process called chromolithography.

Proper food and health care for children were of prime concern because of the high infant mortality rate. Mellins Food, which is advertised on this lithographed trade card printed in 1884 or after, was an important source of healthful prepared food for children. The happy, rosy-cheeked child appearing in the advertisement was an important part of the sales pitch. If a family could afford to purchase prepared baby food, Mellins Food was presented as the best choice. Other clues to the time period of this card beyond the copyright date are the style of the child's chair, the ornamentation on the mantel, and the style of the child's clothing.

Education

Outstanding scholastic performances and good behavior were taught and rewarded through the issuing of rewards of merit by the classroom teacher. Values regarding children's deportment are incorporated into the morality poems and symbols or decorations such as the beehive and the beaver. Children happily playing marbles, cricket or with other toys are pictured along with happy, family scenes. The message is clear: a behaved child who performs well in school lives a happy, rewarding life.

The Artifacts of Childhood

Children's furniture, referred to in this section as the artifacts of childhood, reveals information about attitudes towards children. Although children had been raised for centuries with very little elaborate or specialized furniture, the technology and affluence of the nineteenth century made it possible for middle-class and upper-class families especially to have these assists in child care. The smaller-size production of adult styles of furnishings indicates that children and their trappings were considered part of the total family scene. Thus, their furniture should be as stylish and attractive as their parents'. Also, specialized furnishings enabled adults to exercise control over child behavior and physical movement. By limiting the child's action, adults gained freedom from the need to constantly supervise their children.

Additional information about the technology of furniture production can be gained from examining the artifacts pictured and carrying out further research. The Thonet highchair is made of wood which has been bent under steam pressure. It was shipped "knocked down" and then easily assembled with screws. A careful eye can detect the screws in the photograph.

The Gardner and Company doll's chair has a seat made of laminated wood. Lamination results from the gluing together of thin sheets or layers of wood to form a solid piece. Plywood is an example of laminated wood. The front chair legs were turned on a lathe. Again, screws can be seen as part of the assembly process. The word "PET," typifies an unspoiled, innocent quality attributed to young children towards the end of the nineteenth century. "Pet" also connotes a favorite or specially loved object or person. In this case, the pet could be the child receiving the gift, the chair itself as a favorite toy, or the doll placed in the chair during play.

Processes used in manufacturing the cradle include lathe turning of the spindles and scroll saw cutting of the curved rockers and head and foot boards. All of these techniques were applied to the production of adult-size furniture as well.

The library of the Strong Museum owns a nineteenth-century price guide from the Thonet Brothers, Vienna, Austria. It lists a child's high table chair with arms at the price of $4.75. Keep in mind that an average working-class family spent 15 to 40 cents a day on meat (More, L.B., **Wage Earner's Budgets A Study of Standards of Living in New York City.** New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1907, p. 209). The library also owns the Centennial Price List (1876) for Gardner and Company, New York. Both of these sources are available for further study.

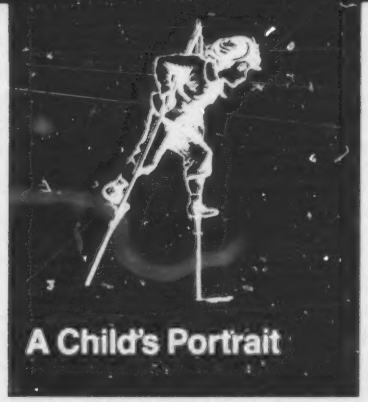
Child Labor

The photographs of Lewis Hine remind us of another side of childhood. Children of families of lower economic classes often contributed to the total support of the family unit. Laws governing working conditions and ages eligible for employment were virtually nonexistent. The purpose of photographers like Lewis Hine was to reveal and record situations in which children found themselves, and thus win public sympathy for reform. Young girls' choices for employment were limited. In New England, the textile mills provided jobs. Or they could work as domestic helpers. Young boys could work in mines breaking coal, or become bootblacks, newspaper carriers or vendors on the city streets.

These children did not directly share in the benefits of rising affluence. The degree to which this was true is documented in John Spargo's 1906 exposé **The Bitter Cry of the Children.**[1] From this source, we learn that girls as young as nine years worked in northern mills. Approximately 80,000 children were employed in textile mills in 1906. The census of 1900 recorded 25,000 boys under 16 years of age as employed in mines and quarries.

Photographs can be emotionally charged reminders of the past as well as documents from which the historian gains specific information. Examining the two photographs will enable students to experience both of these qualities.

1. All data included in this paragraph are from **The Bitter Cry of the Children,** New York, 1906, pp. 148–153, 163–167, as quoted in Richard Hofstadter, ed., **The Progressive Movement 1900–1915,** Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963, pp. 39–44.



A Child's Portrait

Oil and watercolor portraits of children were often commissioned from traveling artists. Paintings were fairly expensive ways to record the stage of a child's life or, occasionally, a child after death. Joseph Whiting Stock, the painter of Mary Childs, traveled throughout New England. Although self-taught, his talent was evident and he made a fairly good living. This fact is noteworthy because his legs were paralyzed as a result of a childhood accident. Mobility was made possible through the development of a special wheeled chair which permitted movement around a room and also could be put onto a railway car. He visited the Childs family in the early 1840s and painted young Mary's portrait complete with toys and household furnishings. A biography of Stock can be found in the Strong Museum library (Juliette Tomlinson, ed., **The Paintings and Journal of Joseph Whiting Stock,** Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press, 1976).

Because the average price of Stock's paintings ranged from $5-$10, most families found them unaffordable. This helps explain the popularity of daguerreotypes when they became available. Photography made portraits less expensive and more accurate.

Portraits of children provide information about clothing styles, furnishings and playthings. Although the style of "Portrait of Mary Childs" is sometimes referred to as folk art, the painting can be called a transitional historical document because the artist has recorded evidence of the effects of industrialization on household goods. The furniture, textiles used in the child's clothing, the carpet, the ceramic tea set and the doll's head are all machine-made objects.

Parents were as proud of their children and their possessions then as now. Through examining photographic portraits of themselves or other members of their family, students will find that photographic records of childhood growth, events and favorite possessions provide not only memory connections to the past but also factual information about the past.

Letters From Children

Original or primary sources such as diaries, letters and newspapers provide the details of events as well as insight into values and traditions. Children's letters are particularly delightful because they have a degree of free expression and honesty about them. The Rochester household of Edward Mott Moore contained many children. As part of their education, letter writing was required. Spelling, grammar, handwriting and clarity of expression were part of this exercise. The letters also reveal the activities of the children, the between-the-lines acceptable standards of behavior of which they were well aware, and a warm, caring relationship among the family members. And, we see that kids, regardless of the time period, are pretty much the same.

At the time each letter was written, Sammy was twelve years of age, Abbie eight years of age, and Dickie twelve years of age. Apparently some of these letters were written while their mother was actually away, while others may have been written solely as exercises. For more information about this family, consult Thomas Crowell's **Adam and Annie Mott: Their Ancestors and Their Descendants** at the University of Rochester library.

Songs and Games for Children

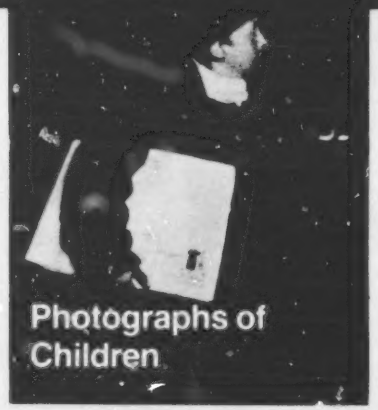
Children learn informally through games, toys and other recreational activities. Often these activities reinforce lessons which have been taught in school or at church. Music in the form of folk songs, rhymes or narrative stories became an instructional tool as well. Songs and games were not always written down; often they were part of an oral tradition passed on from generation to generation. The Strong Museum library owns nineteenth century periodicals and rare books, such as Elizabeth Leslie's **American Girl's Book or Occupation For Play Hours** (Boston: Munroe and Francis; C. S. Francis, N.Y., 1831), which are available for further study. In addition, games and educational toys are on display in the Museum's study collections.

The activities for this segment include an outdoor game, a set of playing cards and lyrics of songs written for children. In addition to the information provided with each material, other points should be made. The origin of scotch in the term hopscotch has been attributed to the tracing or scotching of lines on the ground (Leslie Daiken, **Children's Games Throughout the Year,** London: B.T. Botsford, Ltd., 1949, p. 42). The purposes of this game, still a childhood favorite, included teaching coordination and cooperation with other players.

Playing cards produced by the American Card Company reflect the political climate of the time. The symbols used represent liberty, federalism and the Union cause. Even the name of the company makes clear their position on the war and related issues.

The song lyrics written especially for young children taught them activities which they would have to undertake in adulthood, such as housecleaning for girls, counting and other forms of computation, and rules of behavior and etiquette.

Students should be encouraged to think of games and songs from their own childhood and to compare them to the materials presented in this section.



Photographs of Children

Manuals for Child Care

Photographs were an affordable, readily available means of preserving images of childhood. The stages of growing up could be faithfully recorded by the local photographer. Backdrops consisted of idyllic outdoor scenes, children were dressed in their finery, and props included favorite playthings. Although the children photographed are preserved in what may be called an unnatural state, we can learn not only about photographic processes, clothing, furnishings and playthings, but also about attitudes towards children.

The photograph of the Gould children was taken in Watertown, New York by a local photographer. The clothing of the girl, age 4 years, is expected attire. The two male children, one on the far left and one in the center, are three years, and twenty months respectively. There was little differentiation between boys' and girls' clothing during a child's early years. The denial of sex difference in clothing reflects the attitude that children were innocent and distinct from adults; children were considered to be in a pure, separate class of their own. Students may realize that even today infants are dressed in a uni-sex fashion.

Silver gelatin prints such as the Gould photograph are made from negatives and were made between 1880 and 1920. Gelatin is a transparent protein material used as an emulsion or light sensitive coating on paper. Silver halides are light sensitive and part of the image-forming process. A chronology and definitions of photographic processes can be found in Appendix I of Thomas J. Schlereth's **Artifacts and the American Past (1980)** and Robert A. Weinstein and Larry Booth's **Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs** (1977). Both sources are published by the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville, Tennessee, and are available in the Strong Museum library.

The photograph of the two girls exemplifies qualities similar to those in the photograph of the Gould children. The girls dressed in their feminine best are shown with dolls and a carriage in a sylvan setting. This photograph is an albumen print, a process used from 1850 to around 1895. Albumen is derived from a nutritive material such as egg white. It was also used as an emulsion.

Both photographs can be dated using the costumes in which the children are dressed, the dates of the objects with which the children are pictured which may be available in manufacturers' catalogues, city directories listing the photographer's studio, or knowledge of the type of photographic process used. Students should be encouraged to think about how to date the photographs, why the photographs were taken, and what photographs reveal about values and attitudes.

Doctors, ministers, social reformers, housewives and various other individuals expressed opinions about raising children during the nineteenth century. These opinions were found in magazines and in child care manuals. Several volumes including Jacob Abbott's **Gentle Manners In The Management of the Young** (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871) are available in the Strong Museum library. **Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine,** a widely read periodical of the time, is the source of the selection "Precocious Children" which appears here. The conflict of waiting for a child to be ready to undertake tasks and responsibilities as opposed to making a child ready through early exposure is very much in evidence. The philosophical debate backed by experiential evidence on both sides of the issue continues.

Students should investigate the accepted procedures for raising children which were in effect at the time they were young, how these attitudes have changed, and how they compare to the opinions expressed in the selected article.

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

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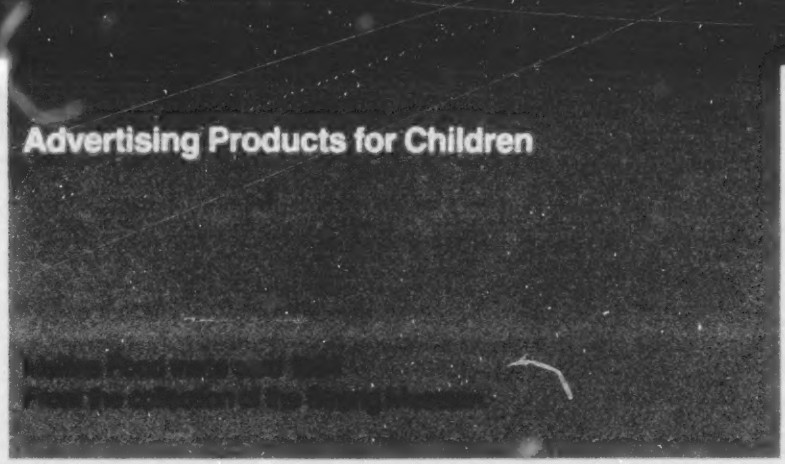
Advertising Products for Children



Trade cards, usually equivalent in size to a postcard, were given to customers by manufacturers in order to promote their products. As knowledge about the health of children increased, special products were developed.

Examining the object

1. Look at the trade card carefully. How does the child feel about Mellins Food?

2. What specialized furniture and utensils for children do you see?

3. In what type or economic status of household might this scene be taking place?

4. What information is given about the date of printing? the method of printing?

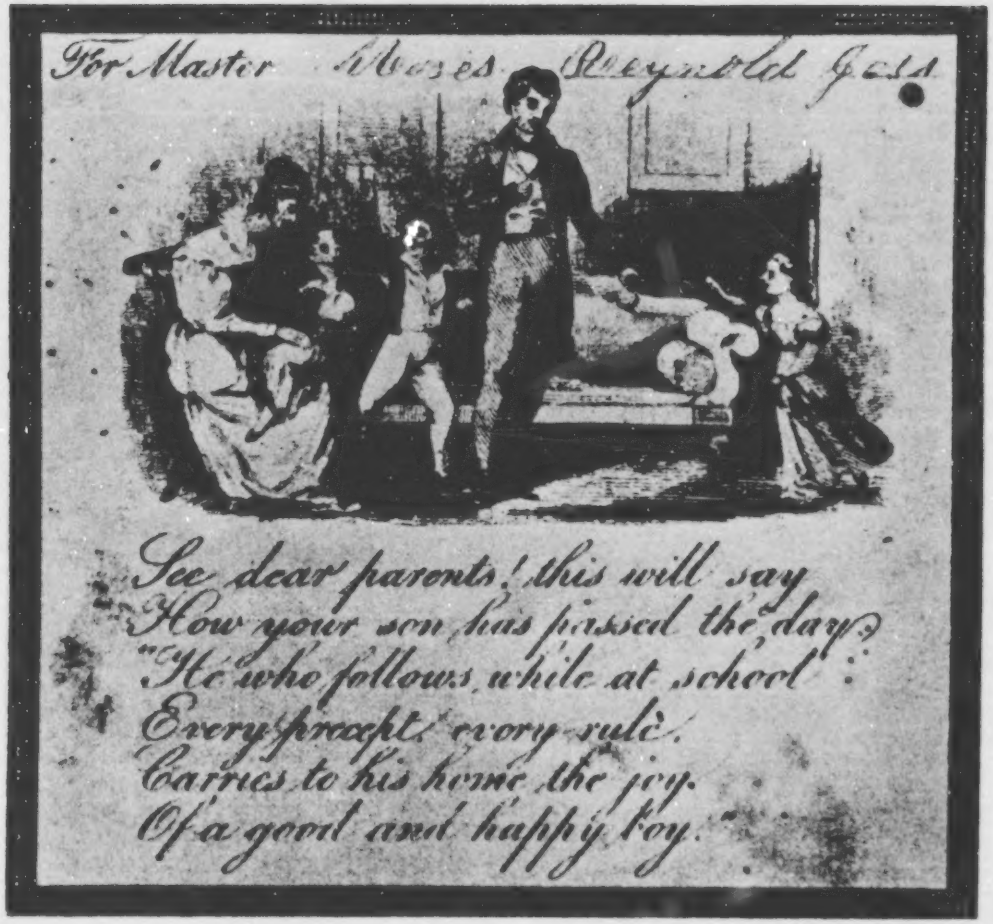
5. To what sources would you go to find out more about Mellins Food?

6. Would you be persuaded to purchase Mellins Food for your child? Why or why not? What factors would you have to consider?

Thinking about the object

1. Walk down the aisles of a supermarket and notice the variety of foods and other products developed for children. Read some of the product labels. What health benefits for children are promoted?

2. Notice the amount of advertising for children's products in newspapers, magazines and on television. In what ways do manufacturers encourage the purchase of their products? Is good child health a major concern?


For Master Moses Reynolds Jas.
See dear parents! this will say
How your son has passed the day?
He who follows while at school
Every precept every rule.
Carries to his home the joy.
Of a good and happy boy.

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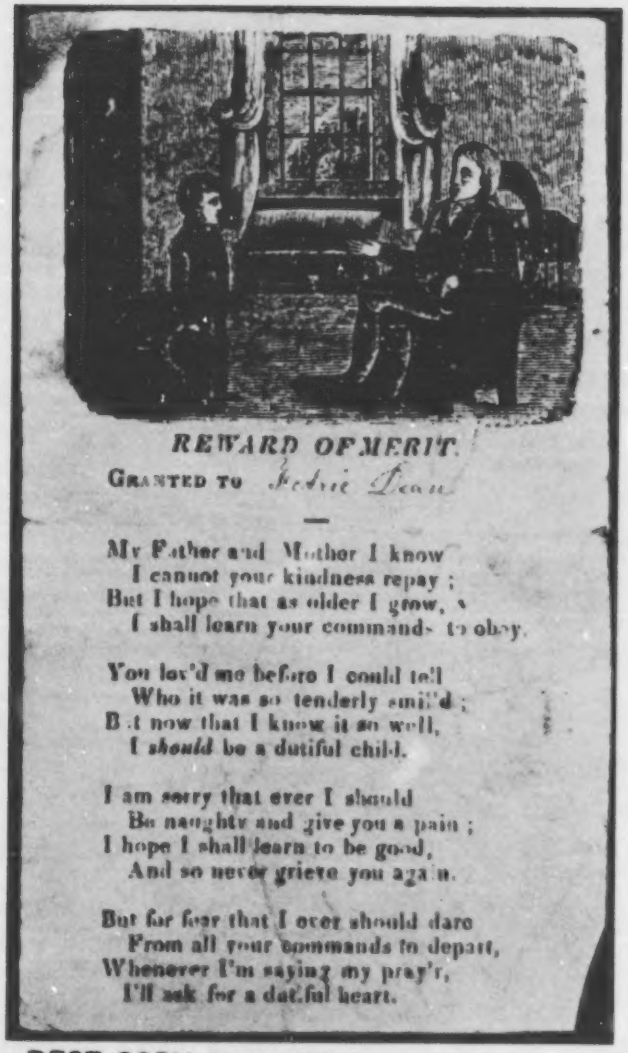
REWARD OF MERIT.
GRANTED TO Jessie Dean
My Father and Mother I know
I cannot your kindness repay ;
But I hope that as older I grow,
I shall learn your commands to obey.
You lov'd me before I could tell
Who it was so tenderly smil'd ;
But now that I know it so well,
I should be a dutiful child.
I am sorry that ever I should
Be naughty and give you a pain ;
I hope I shall learn to be good,
And so never grieve you again.
But for fear that I ever should dare
From all your commands to depart,
Whenever I'm saying my pray'r,
I'll ask for a dutiful heart.

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Rewards of merit from the collection of the Strong Museum.

Children were encouraged to perform well at school. Those who did received rewards of merit. These small cards often were decorated with symbols and words of encouragement.

Examining the objects

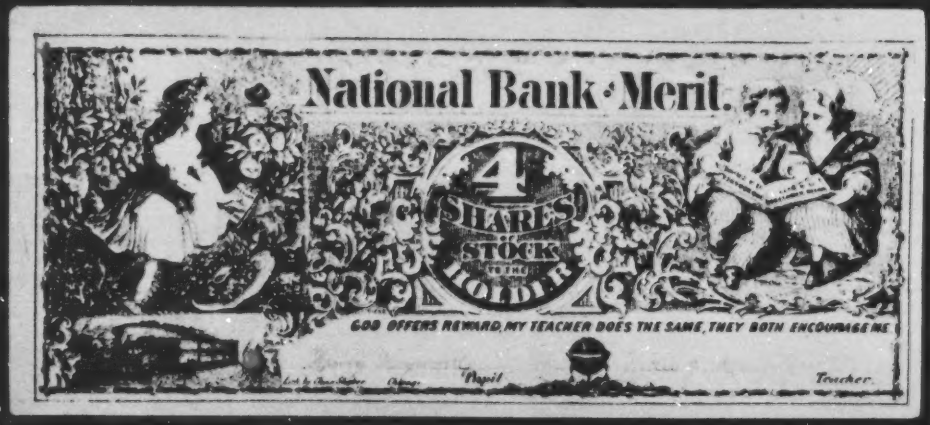
1. Reward of merit granted to Fredric Dean.
Read the poem. What lesson or moral is being taught? For what reason do you think Fredric Dean received this reward of merit?

2. Reward of merit granted to Henry Haywood.
Describe the symbols found in the illustration. What lessons are being taught?

3. Reward of merit granted to Master Moses Reynold (last word illegible).
What lesson or moral is being taught?

4. Reward of merit from J. Brownell.
What is the meaning of the beaver symbol? Describe the rest of the scene pictured. What lesson is being taught?

5. Reward of merit presented to Master Mahlon (last name illegible).
What symbol is used to represent hard work? What other symbols or illustrations are included? For what purpose might this reward of merit be used?



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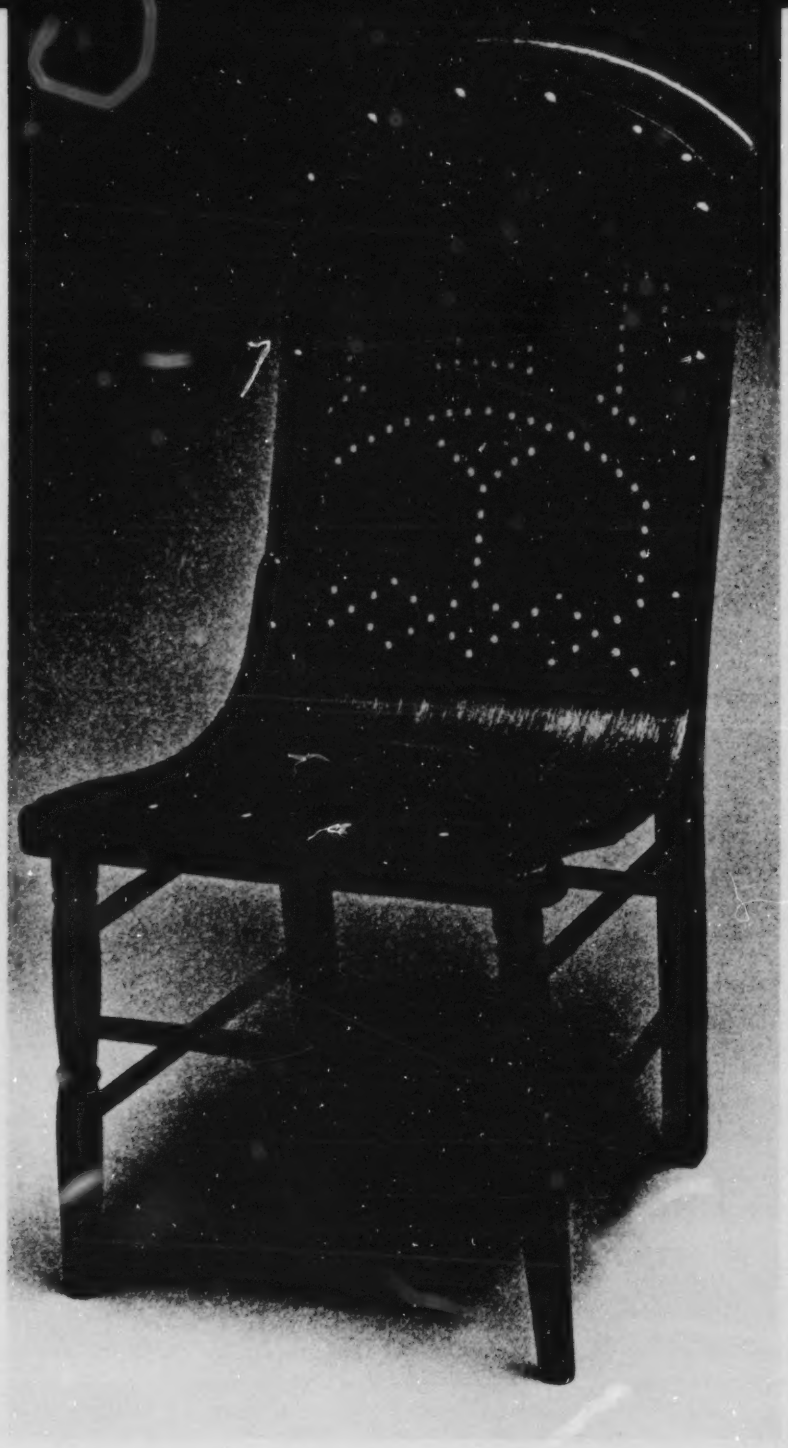
Thinking about the objects

1. How effective would rewards of merit be in promoting good behavior or scholarship?

2. What substitutes for rewards of merit do we use in schools today?

3. Design your own reward of merit using some of the same symbols found on nineteenth century examples. What symbols from today could be included if rewards of merit were being printed?



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The Artifacts of Childhood

Thonet Brothers, Vienna, Austria. High arm chair c. 1895
Gardner and Company, New York, N.Y. "Pet" doll's chair c. 1875
From the collection of the Strong Museum.

An artifact is an object produced by a culture for a specific purpose. Museums collect objects from both the past and the present. These artifacts are studied by curators or caretakers of collections and by historians for the clues which they give about how people lived.

The photographs on the opposite page are of artifacts in the collections of the Strong Museum. When you visit the museum, you can see the real objects.

Examining the objects

1. What purpose does this chair serve? How would you describe it? Of what other types or forms of furniture does it remind you?

2. How might the wood frame have been formed?

3. Look carefully at the photograph. See if you can find out how the chair was assembled. What advantage is there to this method of construction?

4. Look at the doll's chair. What purpose does this chair serve?

5. Find the clues and describe how the chair was constructed.

6. Notice the decoration. Why do you think the word "PET" is used?

7. Examine the photograph of the child's cradle. What mass-production factory methods were used?

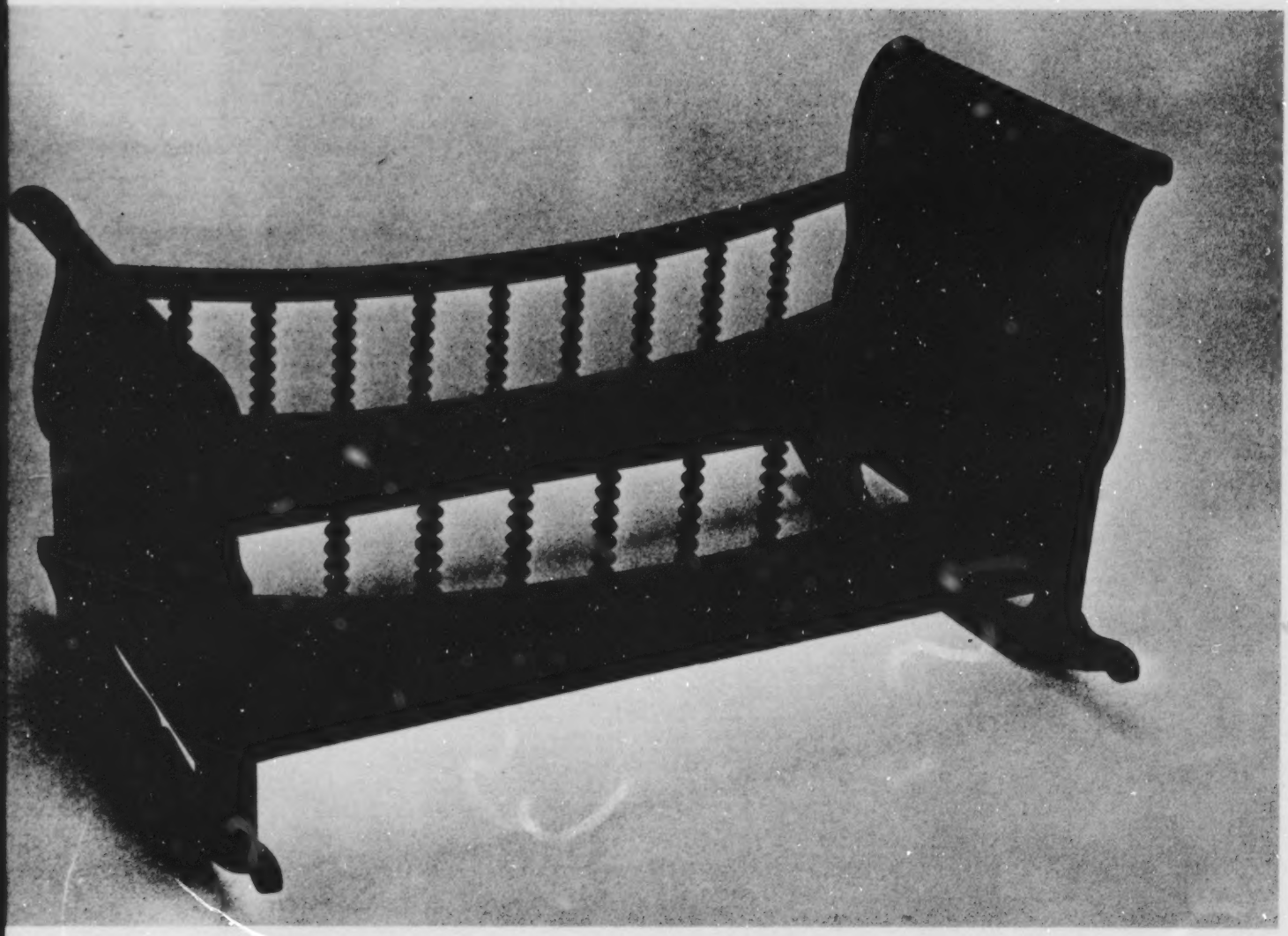
8. Why was this type of furniture considered necessary? What advantages did it provide for adults?

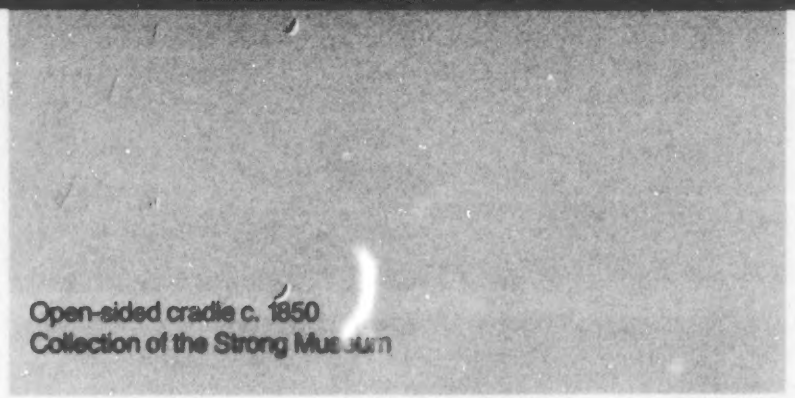
9. Do these pieces of furniture look comfortable or practical for children?

10. In what economic class household would you find these furnishings? What is your evidence?

11. What other information do you need about these objects which you cannot get from the photographs? What should you do next to complete your investigation?

Remember that curators and historians do not always find all the answers to their questions either. They have to wait until new information is uncovered.





Open-sided cradle c. 1850
Collection of the Strong Museum

Thinking about the objects

1. Which of these forms of childhood furniture have survived?

2. Find examples of children's furniture used today. What materials and forms of construction have been used? Why have changes occurred? Which characteristics have remained the same?

3. Does children's furniture serve the same function today as it did in the nineteenth century?

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Child Labor

Examining the photographs

1. Look at the photograph of the young girl. How old do you think she is? Describe her clothing. What is her job? Is it dangerous? How do you think that she feels about her job?

2. The photograph of the newspaperboys also tells us about the lives of some children during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What are the boys in the photograph about to do? Does selling newspapers seem to be a profitable business?

3. Compare the children in the two photographs. From what kinds of homes might they have come? Would these children have had Mellins Food and a Thonet Brothers chair? Which children would have the best hope for improving their life styles? Why?

Thinking about the photographs

1. Why do you think these photographs were taken? To what sources would you go to learn more about the photographer Lewis Hine? Find examples of photographs in newspapers and magazines which are used to persuade or educate people about a point of view.

2. What additional information do we need in order to understand more about child labor during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

3. What laws have been passed since then to protect children from the working conditions or situations found at the turn of the century?

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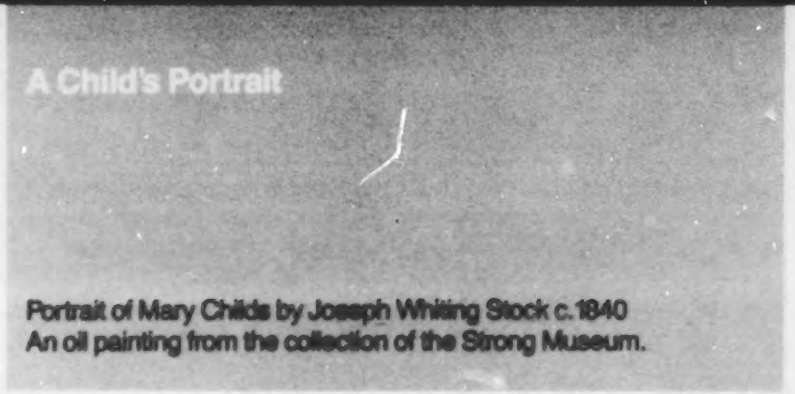
A Child's Portrait



Portrait of Mary Childs by Joseph Whiting Stock c.1840
An oil painting from the collection of the Strong Museum.

Examining the painting

Although we usually look at a painting as a work of art and sometimes as decoration in a room, paintings can serve as a source of information about the past. The "Portrait of Mary Childs" gives information about the time in which she lived.

1. With what types of objects is Mary Childs shown? Why do you think that they were selected?

2. What clues are there from which we can date this painting?

3. Because we know that the Industrial Revolution was well underway by 1840, we can assume that some of the furnishings in this portrait were machine made. Which objects do you think were mass-produced? Why?

4. Joseph Whiting Stock, the painter of this portrait, was a self-trained artist who, in spite of being paralyzed from the waist down as the result of a childhood accident, traveled throughout New England. The average price of a Stock portrait was $5-$10. Families who found his prices affordable commissioned or hired him to paint portraits. Why would a child's portrait be desirable?

Thinking about the painting

1. Even today, few families can afford to have portraits of their children painted. What method would we use to serve the same purpose? What other advantages besides cost does photography offer?

2. Compare the clothing, objects and setting found in the "Portrait of Mary Childs" with a photographic portrait of a child taken recently. What are the similarities and differences?

The following are transcriptions of the original letters

letter #1

"Rochester Nov 23rd 1866

"Dear Mother

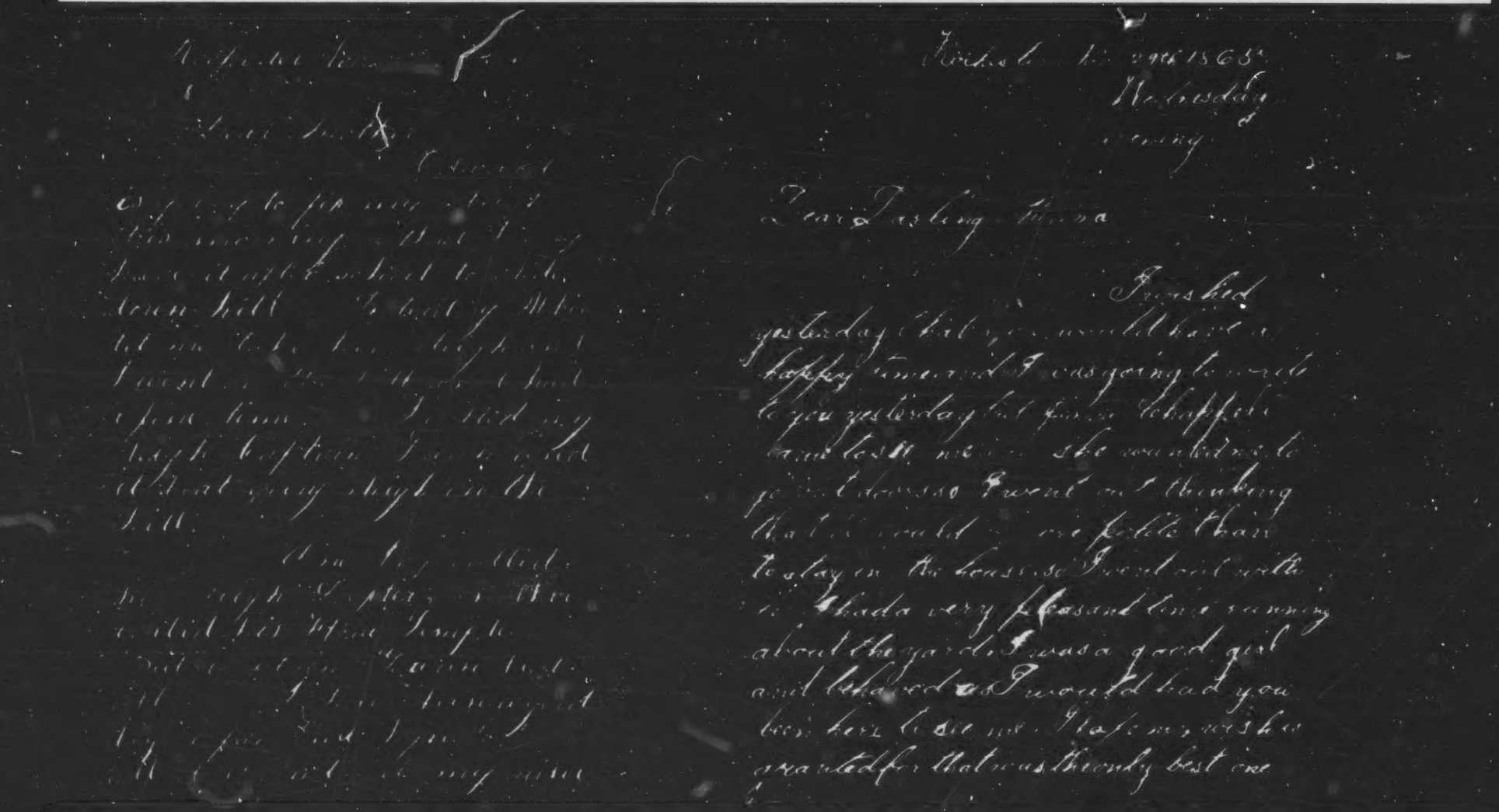
"Edward is going to fix my sleigh this morning so that I may have it after school to slide down hill. Yesterday Abbie let me take her sleigh and I went on the hill and had a fine time. I called my sleigh Captain Gowan and it beat every sleigh on the hill."

letter #2

"Rochester Nov 29th 1865 Wednesday evening

"Dear Darling Mama

"I wished yesterday that you would have a happy time, and I was going to write to you yesterday but Jennie Chappell came to see me and she wanted me to go outdoors so I went out thinking that it would be more polite than to stay in the house so I went out with her. I had a very pleasant time running about the yard. I was a good girl and behaved as I would had you been here to see me."



Letters From Children

Original or primary sources tell much about the ideas, attitudes and customs of a time period. Children's letters, such as the ones in which the following sections were found, are often accounts of activities as well. These letters were written by the children of Edward Mott Moore, a Rochester family.

Examining the letters

1. Letter from November 23, 1866, written by S. (Sammy) M. Moore. What type of relationship exists among the children in this household? How are Sammy's activities similar to those of children today?

2. Letter from November 29, 1865, written by Abbie Moore. For what reason(s) is Abbie writing to her mother? What do you think she was concerned about?

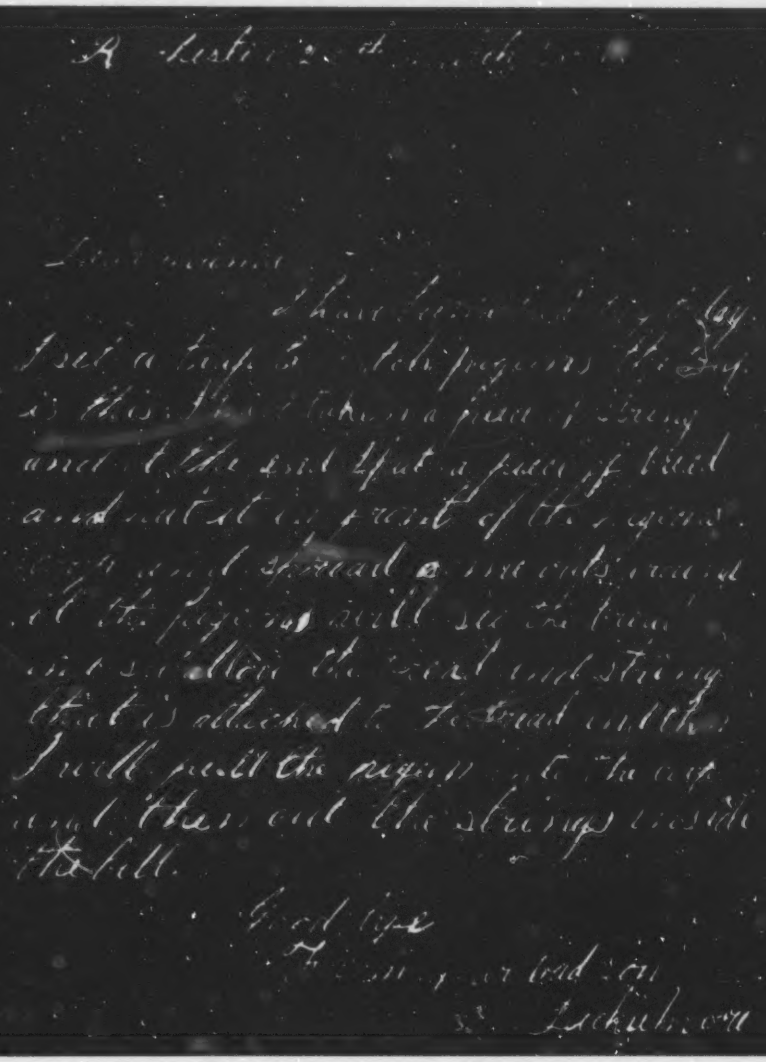
3. Letter from March 26, 1867, written by Dickie Mott (Moore). Why is Dickie writing to his mother? How does he feel about what he did?

letter #3

"Rochester 26th March 1867

"Dear Mama

"I have been a bad boy today. I set a trap to catch pigeons(;) the trap is this: I have taken a piece of string and at the end I put a piece of bread and put it in front of the pigeons coop and spread some outs around it the pigeons will see the bread and swallow the bread and string that is attached to the bread and then I will pull the pigeon into the coop and then cut the strings inside the bill."



Thinking about the letters

1. What acceptable standards of behavior do these letters reveal?

2. In addition to sending news to their mother, what other purpose did these letters have?

3. Examine some letters, postcards or notes which you wrote as a child. How are they similar to the letters which the Moore children wrote?

CARD WORLD! TIME FOR A CHANGE!
UNION CARDS.
FOREIGN EMBLEMS U
ED LONG ENOUGH IN THE U.S.
NATIONALITY EVERYTHING!!

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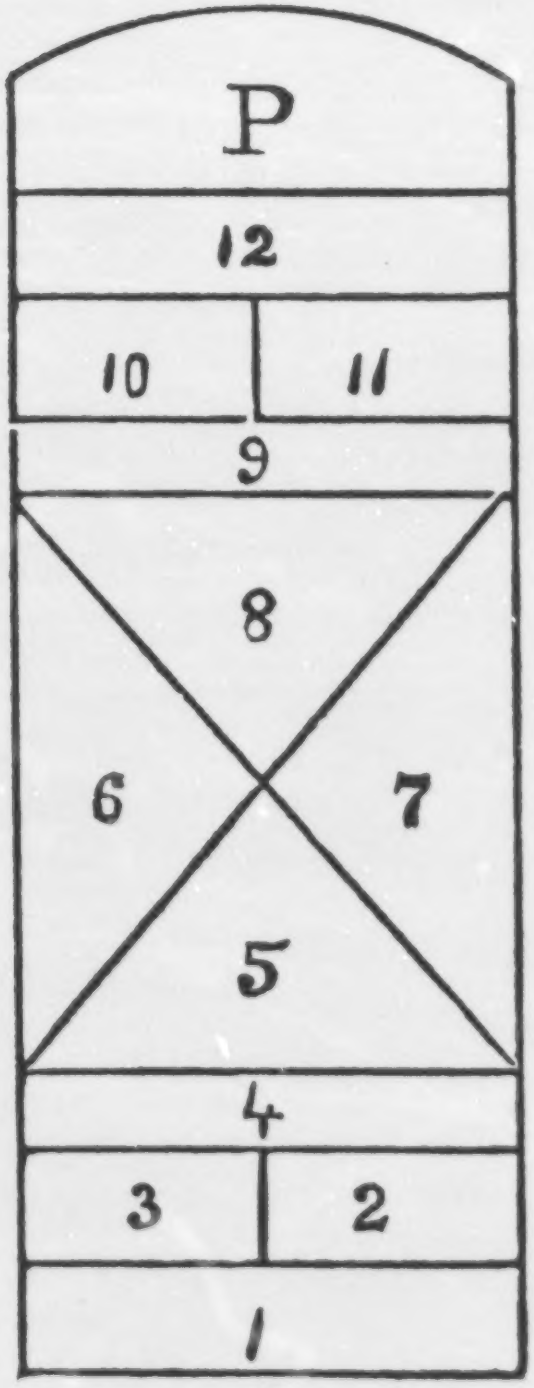
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Songs and Games for Children

Diagram for hopscotch from *In Door and Out. A Book of Amusements.* (Springfield, Ohio: Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1882, pp. 4–5).

Union playing cards. American Card Co., New York 1862. Collection of the Strong Museum.

Examining songs and games for children

1. Look at the diagram for hopscotch. How does the diagram compare with the way you played hopscotch?

2. What skills and attitudes would a child learn while playing hopscotch?

3. The Union playing cards were used by adults and children. Find the symbols on these cards. What does each one represent? How are they related to the time period in which they were used?

4. Read the lyrics of the children's songs. What was each song used to teach? Why is this an appealing way to learn?

A Bowl of Bread and Milk

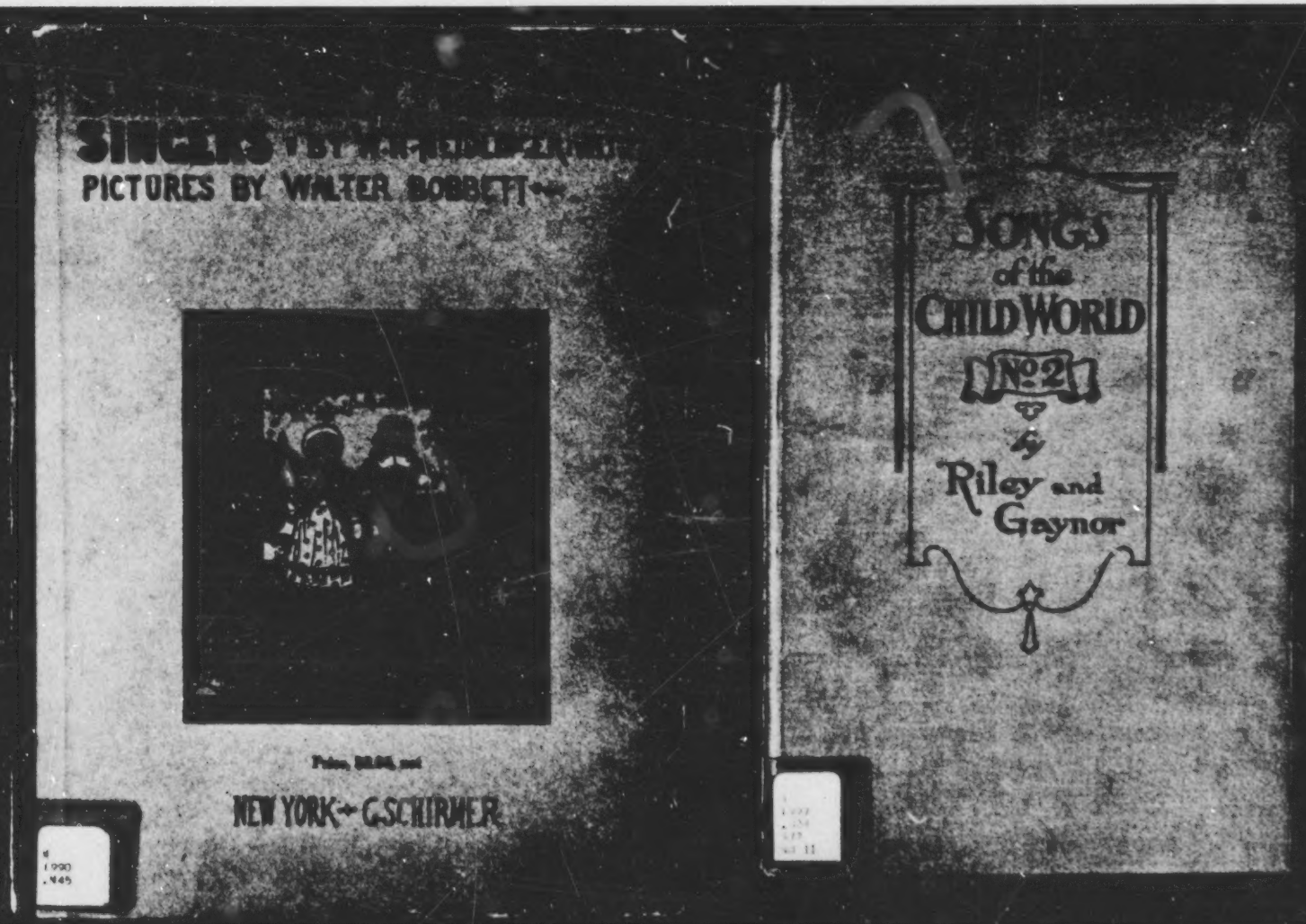
"Seven ships sailing On a milky sea,
Four of them sank—Then there were three.

"One I gave to Toby, One came to me,
And one was left sailing On the milky sea."

Sweeping and Dusting

"Don your cap and apron, Take your willing broom,
Open all the windows In the dusty room;
Move the chairs and tables, Cover all the books,
Sweep in all the corners, Dust in all the nooks.

"Now the sweeping's over, We will dust the room,
Wipe off ev'ry dust-speck, Brought forth by the broom;
Put the chairs and tables, Each in proper place,
Till the room is smiling, With its' wonted grace."



"A Bowl of Bread and Milk" lyrics from W. H. Neidlinger, *Small Songs for Small Singers*. (New York: G. Schirmer, 1896).

"Sweeping and Dusting" lyrics from Riley and Gaynor, *Songs of the Child World*. (Cincinnati: The John Church Co., 1904). Strong Museum library.

Thinking about songs and games for children

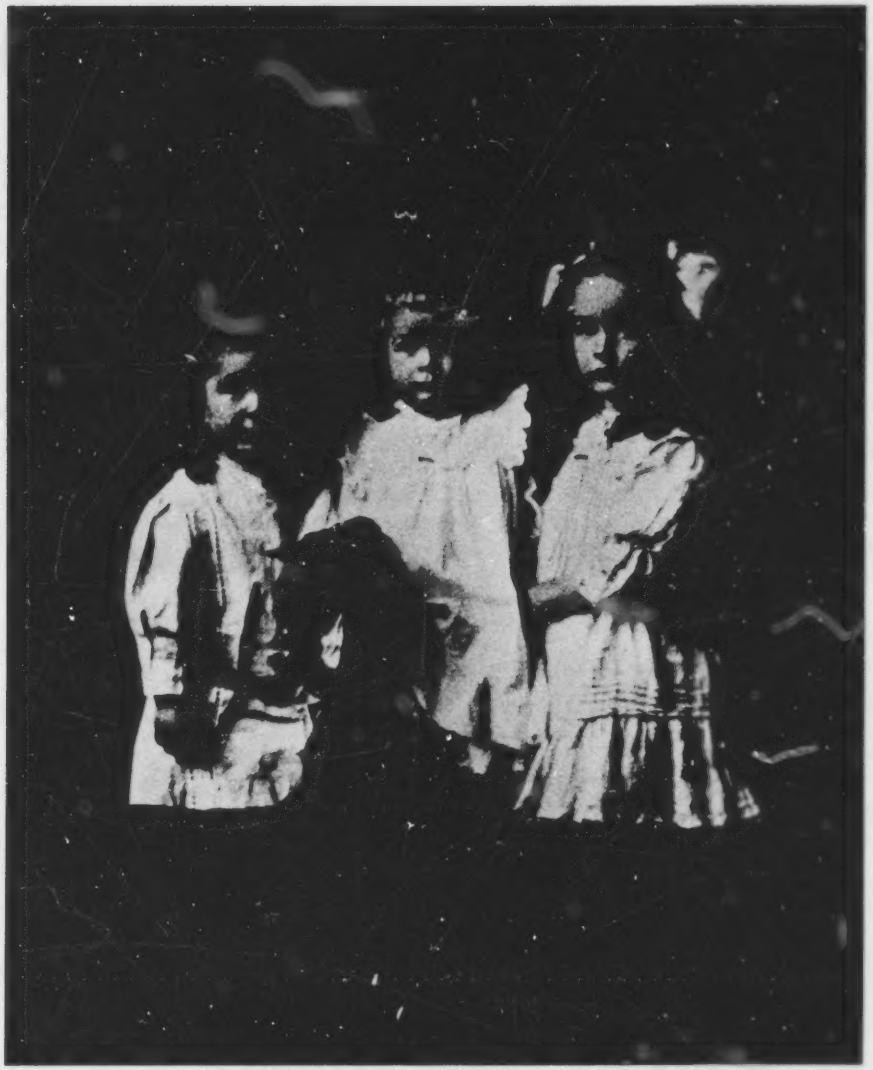
1. What songs and games were popular when you were a child?

2. What purpose did each have?

3. From whom did you learn these songs and games?

4. Are they still popular?

5. Design an educational or teaching game or write lyrics for an educational song for a young child.



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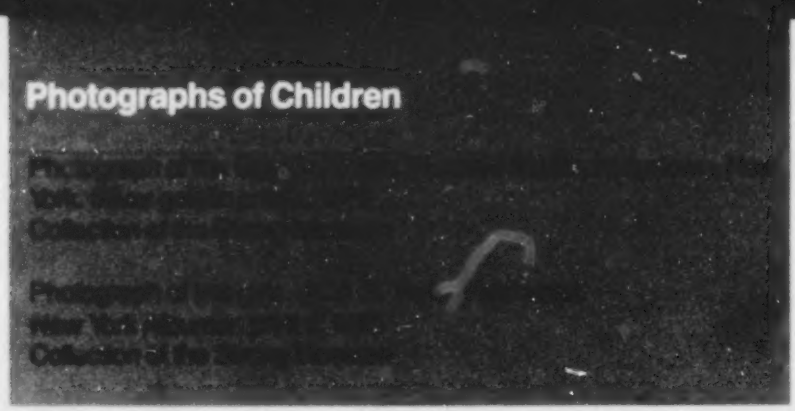
Photographs of Children



Examining the photographs

1. Identify the figures in the photograph of the Gould children. Which are male? female? With what visual clues do you have to work?

2. The children on the left and in the middle are boys. They were dressed similarly to girls because acknowledging sex difference in young children through clothing was not considered important or necessary. What examples can you find of similar clothing attitudes for young children today?

3. Look at the other photograph. Compare it to the one of the Gould children. In what ways are they similar? dissimilar?

4. What information in these photographs can be used to date them? What additional information would be needed?

5. Why were these photographs taken?

Thinking about the photographs

1. Compare these photographs with those of yourself or another member of your family at a similar age. Notice the background, the clothing worn, the pose, and the props in the photograph.

2. Why were your photographs taken?

3. What processes were used to record the images in your photographs? How do they compare to those processes which were used during the late nineteenth century?

4. How does the greater availability of photographic equipment and film combined with lower cost affect the use of photographs to record events, places and people?

Read the excerpts from an article published in a popular nineteenth century magazine.

"PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN"

GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK AND MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1859. PP. 153–154

"Mrs. Smith has but one little child. Of course it is a prodigy. She is a pretty creature, and would be interesting were she not so precociously clever. I have seen young ladies engaged in earnest conversation suddenly startled into silence by a clear, small voice beside them rattling over some hard names in chemistry or botany, and inquiring as to the precise quantity of oxygen in chemical compounds.

"Parents sometimes think they are doing their children a wondrous service, if they stimulate the little creature's tastes, and give its tender abilities what they call proper training. I have learned to avoid 'infant' manuals in botany, geometry, astronomy, zoology, etc., as I would poison; and I look upon the mode of teaching which forces the infant faculties as a legal sort of slow murder. It would be all very well, if a child consisted only of brain and nervous system. If it was a thing made up only of head, then we might perhaps confine the young creature to the dull school-room for the six mortal hours, and applaud a sedentary regimen which promotes only the unnatural precocity of the mind. But, it is a fact, that a child consists of other parts, demanding quite an opposite description of treatment. There are organs of digestion, motion, circulation, and nutrition, every one of which calls for development, even to a greater degree than the brain . . . And, as long-continued action exhausts the vital powers of each bodily organ, it will as surely exhaust the powers of the intellectual. The child dies, or becomes a fool . . . Dr. Coombe mentions the 'Life of John Mooney Mead, who died at the age of four years and eleven months.' This memoir was published as 'a benefit to the cause of education.' Now there never was a wight [creature] punished by the law so torturingly as that poor creature was. He was constantly instructed

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Examining an article about child care

"Precocious Children." Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine. February 1859. pp. 153–154.

Examining an article about child care

1. In the first paragraph, about what is the author complaining? How do we react towards precocious children today?

2. What other types of activities does the author think are as important as intellectual development? What will happen if the other types of growth are ignored? Who does the author think carries the responsibility for the proper care and upbringing of children?

3. List the practices common in dressing, caring for and educating children in 1859 with which the author disagrees.

for six hours daily in the school-room, he then prepared his lessons for next day; in the evenings he was incessantly reasoned with. He was taught hymns before he could speak plainly; and then, without any 'imaginable' cause, he died out suddenly, and his unthinking parents kindly publish their very successful treatment to the world. Parents are anxious to show off the abilities of their offspring; and hence home, the child's home, which should breathe only of happiness, becomes an infant prison, and dyspepsia, deformed limbs, hysteria, and the thousand demons of disease, fatten upon young hearts, never to leave them. Look at the ruddy-cheeked children of the poor, out under God's free air, and in the green open fields; compare their bright and cheerful features, their strong and muscular limbs, and open chests, with the rickety and peevish swarms of our towns. The one have free, clear space, which childhood loves and needs; the other breathes a polluted air, and are 'cribbed, coffined, and confined.' Even our infant schools are, lately, built or selected without adequate care for exercise and air. I have seen as many as one hundred and eighty children cooped up, for five hours daily; in one large room, with no playground. The only exercise the little crowd could take was a brief, tumultuous march round the room, and then to the desk again. Physicians tell us there are four hundred organs of motion in the human body; each of these requires, for its adequate development, free space and motion, and nature herself dictates it.

"... In fact, while a mother's love, which never dies, would defend her child at the loss of life, there is an utter ignorance on all sides as to the commonest principles of healthful training. At the very time when we prison our little ones in close rooms, and weary their young and undeveloped intellect by dismal and weary lessons, whose length and subjects are wholly unfitted to the child. If the little hand becomes hot, the cheek flushed, the limbs thin, the eye dull; if our darling is peevish, cross, and refuses his food, 'Oh, it is the teeth!" or 'It has got a little cold!" My friends, these and many other symptoms are not natural, nor do they arise from the growth of any natural addition to the frame. They are the sad results of confinement, string-tightening, bodicing, lacing, or imprisonment, and want of motion in the open air; of an unholy attempt to work too soon the soft and yielding brain."

Thinking about the article on child care

1. How would the author of this article feel about programs for young children such as day care centers, Head Start, or preschool programs?

2. Are the concerns which are expressed still valid? What additional information do we have about child growth and development which was not available in 1859?

3. Obtain a copy of a recent child care book such as one written by Dr. Benjamin Spock, Dr. L. Burton White or Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. Compare their attitudes and methods with those recommended in "Precocious Children."

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